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Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-fifth session

Observer status for Partners in Population and Development in the General Assembly

Letter dated 24 April 2001 from the representatives of Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Egypt, the Gambia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We, the representatives of the States members of Partners in Population and Development, are writing to you about the granting of observer status to that organization.

Partners in Population and Development is an intergovernmental organization effectively engaged in promoting South-South cooperation in the area of population and development. It was established in 1994 by 10 countries following the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Over these years, it has made much progress in the transfer of knowledge, expertise and skills in population and reproductive health through South-South cooperation. Today the membership stands at 16, covering half of the global population.

It is our strong belief that the Partners' experience needs to be shared with other countries of the world as it could bring positive results for them in population and development. This has been recognized and emphasized in a number of recent intergovernmental processes. The Partners' involvement with the United Nations, at the same time, will enable it to enrich the Organization's work in this area.

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we would request you to include the question of granting the Partners observer status in the General Assembly in the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly as an additional item entitled "Observer status for Partners in Population and Development in the General Assembly".

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, an explanatory memorandum concerning this request is attached.

(*Signed*) Anwarul Karim **Chowdhury**
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Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations

(*Signed*) **Wang** Yingfan
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Alfonso **Valdivieso**
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Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Ahmed **Aboul Gheit**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila **Jagne**
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Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

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(*Signed*) Bob **Jalang'o**
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Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Jorge Eduardo **Navarrete**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Mohamed **Bennouna**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Shamshad **Ahmed**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Noureddine **Mejdoub**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Fred **Beyendeza**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations

(*Signed*) T. J. B. **Jokonya**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations

Annex

Explanatory memorandum

1. Mission and membership

Partners in Population and Development (Partners) is an intergovernmental organization of 16 developing countries, created for the specific purpose of promoting the transfer of knowledge, expertise and skills in population and reproductive health through South-South collaboration.

The initiative was officially launched during the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 by 10 founding members: Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Thailand, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Since then, six more countries have joined as members: China, Mali, the Gambia, India, Pakistan and Uganda. These 16 countries comprise over half of the world's population.

In the Programme of Action adopted at the Cairo Conference, South-South cooperation was recognized as an effective means to implement the Programme in developing countries. The "south-south" approach was endorsed once again at the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of that Programme of Action held in 1999. On that occasion, the Assembly stated:

> "External funding and support, from donor countries as well as the private sector, should be provided to promote and sustain the full potential of South-South cooperation, including the South-South initiative 'Partners in Population and Development', in order to bolster the sharing of relevant experiences, and the mobilization of technical expertise and other resources among developing countries." (General Assembly resolution S-21/2, on key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, annex, para. 88.)

The mission of Partners is "to help implement the Cairo Programme of Action by quickly expanding and improving South-South collaboration in the fields of family planning and reproductive health. Each Partner will strengthen institutional capacity to undertake South-South exchange activities and will rapidly expand the number of South-South training and consultative programmes. Long-term collaborative arrangements will be encouraged. The Partners secretariat will provide a central point for networking among Partners and for identifying opportunities for South-South exchanges and sources of financial support".

Partners membership is open to any developing country with demonstrated involvement in South-South activities and willing to pay an annual membership fee.

Partners is governed by a Board of Directors comprising one representative of each member country, usually the Minister of Health or equivalent. The Partners Executive Committee comprises the Board's Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Currently, the representatives of Egypt, Colombia, Thailand and Kenya serve in these positions, respectively. Hosted by the Government of Bangladesh, a Partners secretariat has been operational in Dhaka since September 1996.

2. Activities

Partners activities and operations have been financed and supported by the member countries themselves through mandatory annual contributions. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation have financially supported Partners from its inception. Donors who have joined them in supporting actions initiated by Partners include USAID, the European Commission, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Japan and several private foundations (Hewlett, Packard and Gates). The current annual budget of Partners is around $2.5 million.

In order to meet the increasing needs of developing countries in the field of reproductive health within the integrated approach adopted at the Cairo Conference, the Partners Board has adopted four priority areas:

- reproductive health, including family planning;
- prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS;
- adolescent reproductive health;
- safe motherhood.

In this framework, Partners promotes South-South cooperation, among member countries and between them and other developing countries, in three strategic areas: capacity-building, research and communication.

Capacity-building. Partners contributes to strengthening reproductive health programmes in the South through five major programmes. First, Partners executes a programme, funded by the European Commission and the United Kingdom, comprising five projects aimed at supporting South-South exchanges among 18 institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The programme entails interventions for adolescents, religious leaders and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases/HIV/AIDS. Second, Partners is executing a South-South fellowship programme, with training institutions in the South bearing most of the costs. Third, the Global Leadership Programme, funded by the Gates Foundation, aims at developing a cadre of programme leaders through training based on multi-country experiences in 12 developing country institutions. Fourth, with support from the World Bank and the Gates Foundation, Partners set up a Small Grants Fund aimed at enabling non-governmental organizations and private organizations to develop innovative programme designs that can attract other funds for actual implementation. Fifth, the Visionary Leadership programme, to be launched soon with support from the Packard Foundation, aims at creating a critical mass of trained leaders in four selected countries, through a modular training approach providing technical tools on policy development.

Research. Partners has established a network of research institutions and researchers to facilitate sharing of research resources and skills and the application of research findings. In this framework, Partners organizes workshops on South-South research and has recently established a collaboration arrangement with the World Health Organization (WHO). Also, Partners has developed a South-South management model and a manual to document and disseminate successful interventions.

Communication. Aimed at supporting the other programme areas, Partners produces and disseminates information through printed and Internet media on South-South cooperation. Examples are the Partners web site (www.South-South.org), the Partners electronic and printed newsletter, and the publication of country profiles, country briefs and a directory of Partner country institutions providing South-South cooperation.

In implementing the activities summarized above, Partners obtains technical guidance from an international advisory committee comprising eminent leaders in the reproductive health field from both developed and developing countries.

3. Rationale for observer status

Participation in sessions of the General Assembly as an observer will enable Partners to achieve greater success in the mission and activities described above. Granting Partners observer status will greatly facilitate its interaction with Member States and relevant United Nations programmes and agencies participating in the regular and special sessions of the Assembly, the sessions of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies and meetings of various relevant committees and intergovernmental bodies.

Interaction with Member States at the General Assembly level is of crucial importance to secure support at the policy level for the South-South cooperation activities implemented by Partner countries at the field level. This would involve dialogue with representatives of both developing and donor countries.

Observer status will also strengthen the relationship between Partners and relevant United Nations bodies, programmes and agencies. Partners has developed a special relationship with UNFPA, which has provided funding and administrative support to Partners during its formative years. A time-bound agreement allowed Partners to start operations under the UNFPA finance and personnel rules and regulations. Although Partners has established its own arrangements for these purposes since January 2001, both organizations are willing to continue their close relationship for programme implementation. Partners activities are often coordinated with UNFPA field offices and country support teams. UNFPA is represented, in a non-voting capacity, in the Partners Board.

The World Bank has also provided financial support to Partners since its inception. Additionally, Partners has established working relationships with WHO, particularly in the fields of operational research and diseases of poverty, and with the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of the United Nations Development Programme.

Reaffirming support to the work of the Partners in promoting South-South cooperation in population, the Programme of Action of the South Summit held in Havana in April 2000 referred to the exchange of experiences on effective population planning ... developed in the South based on local skills and resources that can fit into diverse need of communities as a means to promote social development within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Aware of the importance of the interaction with Member States and United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, Partners has followed with keen interest several General Assembly events, particularly the special session for the follow-up to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (July 1999)

and the special session for the follow-up to the 1995 World Conference on Women (May 2000).

Observer status will allow Partners a closer involvement in the work of the United Nations as well as in events of direct relevance to the Partners mandate, such as the special session on HIV/AIDS (June 2001), the special session on Children (September 2001) and the Third Conference on the Least Developed Countries (May 2001).